

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT?

Successful projects are those that 1) meet business requirements, 2) are delivered and maintained on schedule, 3) are delivered and maintained within budget, and 4) deliver the expected business value and return on investment. Many factors contribute to project success, but effective project management and governance practices are particularly critical. This document outlines the most critical characteristics of successful projects and the most common contributors to project failure.

Factors that are crucial to the success of any project include:

- Clear and clearly articulated goals
- Comprehensive, long-term, and detailed planning
- Early definition of deliverable quality criteria
- Active executive support with a shared vision throughout the project's life
- Carefully planned implementation
- Concise, consistent, complete, and unambiguous business and technical requirements
- Realistic estimates and schedules
- Early risk analysis and ongoing risk management
- Planning for business process change management
- Proactive issue resolution
- Stakeholder involvement throughout the life cycle
- Defined and consistently executed change management to minimize scope increases
- A skilled Project Manager experienced in the execution of project management best practices
- Standard software infrastructure
- Execution of a formal system development methodology (such as the State's System Development Life Cycle)
- A competent team
- Commitment to success

Factors that often contribute to the failure of a project include:

- Lack of stakeholder/user input
- Incomplete and/or vaguely defined requirements or specifications
- Changing requirements or specifications
- Lack of executive support
- Insufficient planning
- Underestimated time and/or resources allocated for design, development, quality assurance, and/or quality control
- Technological incompetence
- Insufficient resources
- Unrealistic expectations
- Unclear objectives
- Unrealistic timeframes
- New or untested technology